THREE FINGER-TIP SUCCESSES

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Three Finger-Tip Successes

By

A. E. Septinelli and J. Gustav White

In California the successful rehabilitation of blind clients is directly attributable to the two "II's" of the blind counselor's equipment, one "I" for imagination, and one "I" for ingenuity. These two "II's" lead the Rehabilitation Officer into industry to examine jobs and to perform those jobs that are feasible for the blind. He then brings in the blind potential worker, trains him on the job, and thereby "sells" the personnel director on the capacities and abilities of the blind. These three typical histories illustrate the success of this sound practice.

1. *Frank Schwietzer,* 42, married, with one child, had been an auto mechanic until 1928 when he lost his sight. In October 1943 employment training was secured for him at Avion Aircraft, Inc., Los Angeles. His war job was to drive rivets on airplane wings in cooperation with a normally sighted bucker. In two years this job had developed to a point where he was operating a drill press, pneumatic screw driver, punch press, kick press, and many assembly and sub-assembly jobs. By "VJ" Day his lead man and foreman had been so favorably impressed with his work that when they purchased a lock manufacturing company, they took him with them.

Mr. Schwietzer is still employed by this same firm, The Gateway Manufacturing Co. He started there as a drill press operator, followed shortly with

Frank Schwietzer, blind supervisor of sighted workers in Los Angeles Lock Factory

work using power machines in tapping, drilling, punch press and non-power machinery, such as kick press, hand tools and the like. Now he is in complete charge of the lock assembly division and, although totally blind, supervises and corrects the work of normally sighted employees. His department meets all production quotas on an equal footing with the normally sighted supervisors of other departments.

2. *Thomas T. Watkins.* In March of 1945 Mr. Watkins was placed as a roll-

ful attitude toward people. She was able to see that they had good service because she was genuinely interested in helping her customers. This client would never have made good on a high powered merchandising job, where a great amount of pressure was involved, for the same reasons she failed on the retail selling and intelligence tests. She was sixty years old and just could not function with great rapidity in a school type situation. But she could still function with efficiency in a smaller, unhurried shop.

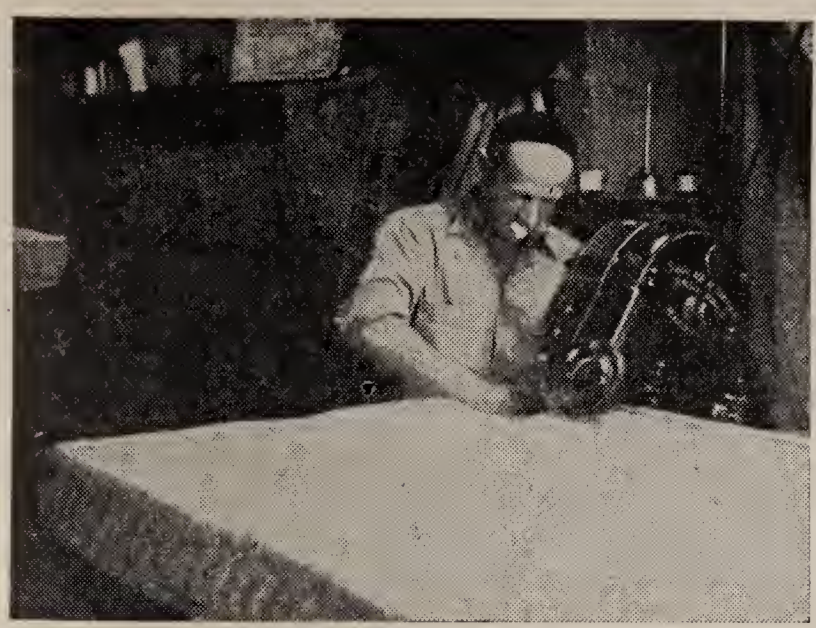
Older people who have not been in school for a long time or who have not held office or clerical jobs even lose their facility with pencil and paper. They fill out application forms more tediously, they adjust their glasses, they consider questions from many angles before deciding on an answer and they make their figures and letters laboriously. This sort of slowing down makes the usual aptitude testing procedures which are appropriate for highly selective industry erroneous in a rehabilitation atmosphere. Placing confidence in such test results is worse than having no test results at all. Testing becomes an insecure crutch to the counselor in such cases. When he refers his client for testing, he will naturally have some confidence in the results and a desire to follow them through. Under these conditions the counselor is more likely to err than if he used his own unhampered judgment and good sense.

Interpretation

Interpreting low intelligence test results is a ticklish and difficult job for even the most tactful of counselors. Interpretation has to be made, however. Clients are adult people who do not like to be subjected to tests without having some knowledge of the outcome. If a prospective college student does not have the ability to achieve college success the counselor must face that fact with him. It is more unkind not to do so. If a woman will never learn to be a stenographer because of her lack of verbal abilities and skills, she must know the reason why entering business school for that purpose is unwise. But to interpret low intelligence scores to a client when that score is likely to be completely wrong is a destructive move toward the individual's personality integration. People can withstand the impact of being told they have a bad heart or failing eyesight better than they can to be told they are not smart. One's intelligence is a very private affair. Although it is not hard for a client to recognize that some people are brighter than he is, it is extremely disturbing to know that he isn't even average. If the client does have good intelligence, he will worry all the more about being told his ability is low.

When intelligence quotients or rattings are below average, a counselor must exercise extreme caution in interpreting such results to the client. No patient or client should have an unfavorable intelligence rating stamped on his record unless it has been the result of thorough testing with individual type tests. Unfavorable reports where the time factor has never been recognized are cruel. A competent clinical psychologist is loath to label someone as "dull" or "feeble-minded" on the basis of one testing and never on the basis of a paper-and-pencil timed group test. Yet there are many "testers" who glibly make these classifications on superficial examinations.

(Continued on page 25)



Thomas T. Watkins, Roll-edge Mattress Machine Operator

edge machine operator in a California mattress company. He was 45 years of age, married, with one child. Before losing his normal vision he had been employed as a carpenter, janitor, seaman, and as a warehouseman. With the classification of industrially blind, (visual efficiency 20/200) it became obvious that he must be trained for employment utilizing new skills. This company had already employed eight blind people as filler-box operators, spring assemblers, and box-spring makers, therefore it was easy to inaugurate a training program for him on an equal basis with the training of the normally sighted. Within three months time Mr. Watkins was making $1.35 per hour. When this company went into bankruptcy Mr. Watkins was able to use his skills for another mattress company in Glendale, California, where he is now employed as a roll-edge machine operator at the same salary.

3. *Mrs. Marie Lohman,* age 43. In 1945 Mrs. Lohman was placed at Toyad Inc., a redwood furniture manufacturing company, as a rope weaver. This not only called for the accurate weaving of rope on the base and back of outdoor redwood furniture and couches but for the memorization of types of furniture to match desired designs. Due to labor difficulties this company moved, making it impossible for Mrs. Lohman to travel 40 miles a day to her job. She was then placed in Thompson Suekoff Co. performing an allied operation where she is still employed. Mrs. Lohman is married to a blind, physically disabled husband whom she supports, though blind herself.

The seven men in California Rehabilitation Service for the Blind, are convinced that blind people are as conglomerate a group as any group picked at random. They have the same aims, hopes, ambitions, and skills as normally

Marie Lohman, Rope Weaver for Redwood Furniture

sighted people. They live for the same goals: 1—Financial security through employment; 2—Suitable family life;

3—Adequate recreation; and 4—Satisfaction of spiritual hunger, which assumes different forms in different individuals. They satisfy their aims, hopes and ambitions in all sorts of occupations, doing much the same work that normally sighted people perform.

THE AUTHORS

Anthony E. Septinelli is State Supervisor of Services for the Blind in the California Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation. Prior to joining the staff of the Bureau in 1943 he was with the New York Association for the Blind in New York City for eighteen years, as director of their work for the blind. Mr. Septinelli received his professional training at the Universities of Rochester, Columbia, California at Los Angeles, Southern California, Redlands, and Whittier College. For the past four years he has been doing a weekly radio program, acquainting the public with the rehabilitation services, especially for blind persons.

J. Gustav White is a frequent contributor to the *Journal of Rehabilitation* and other professional journals, and the author of several books on occupational guidance and counseling. Beginning in 1928 Mr. White directed personnel counseling in the Los Angeles Y.M.C.A. Later, his private counseling practice in Los Angeles was sponsored by Associates in Service. Before joining the staff of the California Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation he was Professor of Applied Sociology at Whittier College for twelve years. Since 1943 he has held the position of Training Officer in the California Bureau of Rehabilitation.

Mr. Septinelli interviews Charles Brown, a blind employee, on the radio while the producer, Lou Huston, times the program. The show is ad lib except for a few Braille notes. Its slogan is "If you think that we are blind, see our work and change your mind."

More Persons Rehabilitated

The number of persons rehabilitated (21,125) during the first half of the 1948 fiscal year increased markedly—4,724 or 28.8 per cent—over the number rehabilitated (16,401) during the first half of the 1947 fiscal year. There was an increase in the number of persons rehabilitated in 39 of the 51 States.

The following case load summary released by the Federal Security Agency, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, furnishes a comparison between the first half of the fiscal year 1948 and the first half of the fiscal year 1947.

Item	First half fiscal year 1948		First half fiscal year 1947		Percent Change
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Total case load during period	266,000	100.0	226,811	100.0	+17.3
Cases on rolls at beginning of period	190,819	71.7	157,704	69.5	+21.0
New cases during period	75,181	28.3	69,107	30.5	+ 8.8
Total cases closed during period	58,421	100.0	42,509	100.0	+37.4
Cases on rolls at end of period	207,579	100.0	184,302	100.0	+12.6

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